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Harmony with Nature

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 71/232, in which the Assembly requested the President of the Assembly to convene, at its seventy-first session, an interactive dialogue on Harmony with Nature to commemorate International Mother Earth Day in April 2017, and requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly, at its seventy-second session, a report on the implementation of the resolution.

The present report draws on contributions to the seventh interactive dialogue on Harmony with Nature, held on 21 April 2017, that address Earth jurisprudence, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, trends in the implementation of Earth-centred law and a range of initiatives and achievements in law, policy, education and public engagement relating to Earth jurisprudence during the period 2016-2017. In addition, the report provides key recommendations for the consideration of Member States.

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I. Introduction

1. On 21 December 2016, the General Assembly adopted resolution 71/232, its eighth resolution on Harmony with Nature, which requested the President of the General Assembly to convene, at the seventy-first session of the Assembly, an interactive dialogue to be held at the plenary meetings to be convened during the commemoration of International Mother Earth Day on 21 April 2017, with the participation of Member States, United Nations organizations, independent experts and other stakeholders. The purpose was to discuss the recommendations of the experts' summary report of the first virtual dialogue of the Assembly on Harmony with Nature among experts on Earth jurisprudence worldwide (A/71/266), in order to inspire citizens and societies to reconsider how they interact with the natural world and to improve the ethical basis of the relationship between humankind and the Earth in the context of sustainable development.

2. The seventh interactive dialogue of the General Assembly was therefore held in commemoration of International Mother Earth Day and had before it the experts' summary report as well as the resolution of the General Assembly on Harmony with Nature.

3. The present report addresses the highlights of the dialogue as well as the application of Earth jurisprudence in the light of the experts' report issued in August 2016. Since then, and to advance the overall implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, many of the expert members of the Harmony with Nature Knowledge Network have initiated important activities in the different areas of their competence,[1] with the ultimate goal of ensuring that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature, as stated in Sustainable Development Goal 12, target 12.8.

4. In their report, the experts also recommended that Earth jurisprudence principles should be applied in the implementation of all 17 Sustainable Development Goals, given the fundamental interconnections between humanity and Nature,[2] the urgent need to inspire citizens and societies to reconsider how they interact with the natural world, the widespread threats to its well-being and the importance of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development over the next 13 years.

5. The experts emphasized that human well-being was inextricably linked to the well-being of the Earth, and therefore that the Earth's right to a healthy environment was equally important if human rights were to be protected. Recent reports have affirmed that the well-being of humans and Nature are interdependent, such as the report of the Earth Law Center entitled "Fighting for our shared future: protecting both human rights and Nature's rights"[3] and numerous reports from the Special Rapporteur on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, including reports discussing human rights impacts arising from biodiversity loss (A/HRC/34/49) and climate change (A/HRC/31/52).

6. Furthermore, to strengthen the implementation of Earth jurisprudence, an agreement[4] was signed on 23 September 2016 between the Plurinational State of Bolivia and the Assistant Secretary-General and Controller of the United Nations to

[1] See www.harmonywithnatureun.org/knowledgenetwork/all-members.

[2] "Nature" is capitalized herein to reflect the Earth-centred worldview recognized by some countries (see A/71/266, footnote 3, and resolution 71/232).

[3] See https://www.earthlawcenter.org/co-violations-of-rights.

[4] See http://www.harmonywithnatureun.org/trustfund.html.

contribute to the idea of Harmony with Nature under the trust fund of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, thereby reaffirming the commitment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that by 2030 people everywhere will have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in Harmony with Nature.

II. Highlights of the interactive dialogue of the General Assembly on Harmony with Nature to commemorate International Mother Earth Day

7. On 21 April 2017, the General Assembly held its seventh interactive dialogue on Harmony with Nature at United Nations Headquarters in commemoration of International Mother Earth Day. The overall theme of the dialogue was "Earth jurisprudence". The dialogue was composed of morning and afternoon panels and included expert members of the Harmony with Nature Knowledge Network.[5]

8. The dialogue addressed the roles of the rights of Nature, ecological economics, education, ethics, philosophy, holistic science and the media, as well as Earth jurisprudence more generally, and their significance with regard to advancing the Sustainable Development Goals, including through the adoption of the rights of Nature, with the ultimate goal of forging a thriving relationship between human activity and the Earth.

9. In his opening remarks, the Vice-President of the General Assembly acknowledged the importance of Earth jurisprudence in recognizing the deeply interconnected nature of human and planetary well-being as well as fostering mutually beneficial relationships between humans and the other members of the Earth community. He highlighted the idea that our current human-centred worldview, our laws and our economics had at the core the notion that we lived within a planet that was simply full of "resources" to be exploited at will, for the exclusive benefit of our own species. In contrast, an Earth-centred worldview appreciated that humanity's well-being was derived from the well-being of the Earth, and that living in Harmony with Nature was necessary to sustaining both human well-being and human rights.

10. The Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs stated that Earth jurisprudence was rooted in a philosophy of law and human governance that recognized that the well-being of each member of the human community depended on the well-being of the Earth as a whole. He emphasized that humanity's failure to understand what it meant to be part of the natural world had led us to relate to Nature with only our self-interest in mind. However, he noted that more and more countries had taken action to set that situation right, including by granting legal personhood to Nature, and that the same broad commitment to reshaping our relationship with Nature had been incorporated into the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development under Sustainable Development Goal 12, target 12.8.

11. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Plurinational State of Bolivia emphasized that production patterns had led to climate change and financial crises, thereby demonstrating the limits of economic and cultural development. Bearing in mind that humanity simply could not continue to exist without respecting the planet, he said, it was now vital to adopt a universal declaration on the rights of Mother Earth, with the United Nations playing a critical role in harmonizing the international community's efforts in that regard.

[5] Klaus Bosselmann, Peter G. Brown, Pallav Das, Liz Hosken, Jean-Paul Mertinez, Germana de Oliveira Moraes, Chandra Roy-Henriksen and Linda Sheehan. The moderator was Jorge Islas.

12. The Deputy Permanent Representative of Ecuador to the United Nations emphasized that while human rights and environmental rights had evolved, an important gap between the two still existed, owing to the fact that both human rights and environmental rights, as they currently existed in environmental law, focus on human well-being. However, environmental rights in Ecuador and elsewhere reached beyond human beings, recognizing the environment as a rights-bearing entity. She, too, stressed the importance of having a universal declaration on the rights of Nature.

13. Against that backdrop, the experts participating in the dialogue addressed the implementation of Earth jurisprudence by providing concrete examples of how Earth jurisprudence was unfolding and being applied from the standpoint of the various disciplines they represented.

14. A number of the experts discussed the perspective of the indigenous peoples worldwide, for whom existence depends on living in Harmony with Nature. Indigenous peoples occupy 20 per cent of the Earth's territory and represent 5,000 indigenous cultures, accounting for most of the world's cultural diversity.[6] The areas they inhabit are also those with the greatest biological diversity, and the rights of indigenous peoples to maintain their distinctive spiritual traditional relationship with territory were key.

15. With regard to ethics, some experts proposed that the General Assembly accompany the current Sustainable Development Goal process with a high-level ethical dialogue and promote the idea of States as trustees for the Earth. In moving towards Earth trusteeship, the Assembly could guide the sovereign States of the twenty-first century to act as trustees for the natural environment.

16. That would reflect the many developments taking place in different countries with regard to passing legislation and considering court cases that recognize Nature's legal personality, as addressed in section III of the present report. Experts noted that we must unavoidably think beyond the paradigm of sovereign States and embrace Earth trusteeship. In that regard, an "Earth Trusteeship Council" would create a valuable platform for such a dialogue and would greatly enhance the legitimacy of States with regard to helping implement the Sustainable Development Goals.

17. In the field of economics, some experts addressed the pressing need to reject harmful and misleading assumptions in which the economy was considered to be an isolated system, unconnected to the biophysical realities of the laws of the universe, thereby resulting in radical inequality and the destabilization of Earth's life-support system.

18. In contrast, experts noted that "an economics for Earth" would encompass the notion of planetary limits and recognize that we are members of the Earth community, not masters of it. The goal would be the mutual enhancement of human/Earth relationship and fairness between human generations.

19. Furthermore, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development seeks to realize the human rights of all, and, importantly, states that the Sustainable Development Goals are grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. That once again raises the issue of Nature's rights. It was pointed out that the United Nations had, for example, declared that the human right to water was a prerequisite for the realization of other human rights. Experts pointed out that the declaration raised the question of whether we could say we had a right to something, like a waterway, if the waterway did not itself have a right to exist and thrive. Recognizing Nature's

[6] See www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/mandated-areas1/environment.html.

rights in law and practice could close that gap, in the same way that human rights and the rights of indigenous peoples had been recognized.

20. It was also highlighted that the arts, media and design fields offered significant opportunities for widespread communication, dissemination and engagement with regard to those concepts, and should be prioritized and supported as a means to foster effective understanding and a movement towards implementation of an Earth-centred worldview.

21. Reconciling the ancestral perception with a development perspective requires an understanding that the rights of Mother Earth and Harmony with Nature are preconditions for sustainable development. In that regard, human rights depend on Nature's rights, and implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development hinges on respecting the principles of Harmony with Nature.

22. Recognition in law of the inherent rights of Nature brings the debate on environmental protection within the bounds of what is responsible and sustainable. Changing the perception of Nature from being seen as merely property under the law to being recognized as possessing legal personhood, and holding inherent rights as healthy, natural ecosystems, is key to preserving and conserving it.

23. To achieve the greatest number of Sustainable Development Goals and comply with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it is important to focus efforts to promote, respect, protect and guarantee the rights of Nature. In doing so, a radical change is needed in how the disciplines of law, economics, politics, arts and the media, among others, comply with true ecological sustainable development in the twenty-first century. Inspiration should be taken from the indigenous peoples in the way they relate to the Earth; that is, humans are born within the confinement of the Earth, are part of it and are never above it.

24. The experts stressed that governments, makers of public policy, judges, legislative bodies, law practitioners and society in general must collaborate in creating an Earth-centred perspective for the long term. They recommended that the adoption of a universal declaration of the rights of Mother Earth be seen as a first step. Nations should create new legal mechanisms that actually and effectively guarantee those rights in every phase of legal protection, from the drafting of laws and the implementation of regulatory measures to the resolving of particular disputes before the courts.

25. In conclusion, experts also highlighted the importance of clarifying that Earth jurisprudence was not a synonym for environmental law. Earth jurisprudence was instead a complete vision, under which every law and act of humankind should be seen as the only way of achieving true protection for Nature: rivers, trees, mountains, glaciers, whole ecosystems and the biosphere.

26. Experts also concluded that it was a top priority for governments and civil society to ensure that Earth-centred governance was accompanied by an Earth-centred education. Civil society and governments must collaborate to institutionalize adequate instruments and socialize their scope through all sectors of society, so that everyone could understand why Nature was not a commercial asset. There was no life, no development and no economy without Nature. Therefore it was imperative to stop looking at Nature as an unlimited provider of resources and actually understand it as the foundation of life.

III. Trends in the implementation of Earth-centred law

27. The ethics of stewardship are an integral part of the world's religions and indeed humanity's cultural heritage. Recent developments have taken place in different countries with regard to passing legislation to grant Nature legal personality, and countries have signalled a general trend towards Earth trusteeship. The present section therefore addresses the trends in Earth jurisprudence and how it is being gradually incorporated into law and policy by an increasing number of countries and institutions worldwide.

A. National legislation granting rights of Nature

28. On 10 November 2016, the Constitutional Court of Colombia recognized the Atrato River and its basin and tributaries as having rights. The Atrato River, which is in the Chocó region of Colombia, has suffered from illegal mining that has led to both environmental and humanitarian crises and to litigation to defend the rights of the river and of Tierra Digna-supported local communities.

29. According to Hugo Echeverría, an environmental lawyer, the Constitutional Court's decision was adopted after a ruling in a complex case of illegal mining in which the scale, intensity and duration of the mining activity caused a serious violation of the fundamental rights to life, water, food security, the healthy environment, culture and territory of the communities that inhabit the Atrato River basin and its tributaries.

30. In his analysis of the ruling of the Constitutional Court, Mr. Echeverría noted that the Court took an ecocentric and biocultural perspective and that environmental justice required that they must allow Nature to be subject to rights. In applying its decision, the Court took a step forward in the jurisprudence towards the constitutional protection of one of the most important sources of biodiversity in Colombia: the Atrato River.[7]

31. The decision stated that the Atrato River would be defended by the government and the communities. The judgment further stated that only an attitude of profound respect and humility towards Nature and its beings made it possible to relate to them in just and equitable terms, leaving aside utilitarian, economic or efficient concepts. For Judge Jorge Iván Palacio, who ruled in favour of granting rights to the Atrato River, his conclusion was as obvious as it was difficult: they must save the planet from man himself.

32. In another example, Mexico City adopted a new constitution in early 2017 that addressed the rights of Nature in paragraphs 2 and 3 of its article 13, which stated that the right to the preservation and protection of Nature would be guaranteed by the authorities of Mexico City. In addition, article 13 indicated that a secondary law would be passed to recognize and regulate the protection of the rights of Nature, as formed by all its ecosystems and species, as a collective entity with collective rights. The result will be that citizens of Mexico City will be able to enforce fundamental rights on behalf of Nature.[8] The Constitution of the State of Guerrero similarly recognizes in its article 2 the rights of Nature.

33. In March 2017, the parliament of New Zealand granted the Whanganui River legal status as a person, consistent with negotiations between the Government of New Zealand and Whanganui Iwi that formally began in 2009 and moved to the

[7] Hugo Echeverría, "The case of the Atrato River: a legal view on the rights of Nature", May 2017. Available from www.facebook.com/UNHwN.

[8] See http://cdmx.gob.mx/storage/app/uploads/public/589/746/ef5/589746ef5f8cc447475176.pdf.

signing of the Whanganui River deed of settlement in 2014. The legislation recognizes the deep spiritual connection between the Whanganui Iwi and its ancestral river and creates a strong platform for the future of the Whanganui River.[9]

34. Gerrard Albert, a spokesperson for the local Maori people, stated that the community had long been concerned about the Government's impact on the health and well-being of the river, and that the community had always believed that the Whanganui River was an indivisible and living whole, called "Te Awa Tupua", which included all its physical and spiritual elements from the mountains of the central North Island to the sea.

35. The river's interests will now be represented jointly by a member appointed by the Maori community and one appointed by the Government.

36. On 20 March 2017, the High Court of Uttarakhand, India, granted the Ganga and Yamuna Rivers legal personhood status. The High Court ordered that two government officials in charge of cleaning and rejuvenating the river as well as the Advocate General of Uttarakhand act as the "legal parents" of the holy rivers and work as the human face to protect, conserve and preserve them and their tributaries. The High Court further stated that those officers would be bound to uphold the status of the two rivers and promote their health and well-being.[10]

37. On 30 March 2017, the High Court of Uttarakhand also granted the Himalayan Gangotri and Yamunotri glaciers, including waterfalls, meadows, lakes, dales, forests, wetlands, grasslands and springs, the status of legal persons for their survival, safety, sustenance and resurgence. Judges Rajiv Sharma and Alk Singh observed that past generations had handed over Mother Earth to humans in its pristine glory and humans were morally bound to hand over the same Mother Earth to the next generation. The High Court directed that the rights of those legal entities should be equivalent to the rights of human beings and the injury or harm caused to those bodies should be treated as injury or harm caused to human beings.[11]

38. In Ecuador, where the nation's Constitution was amended to include rights of Nature in 2008,[12] judicial decisions in at least five cases have recognized those rights and a number of regulatory actions have enforced that provision. The Plurinational State of Bolivia has enacted two national laws that address the rights of Nature, and Argentina and Brazil also have trends in that regard.

39. In the United States of America, municipalities throughout the country have also recognized the rights of Nature through local laws. In 2010, Pittsburgh became the first major city to adopt an ordinance recognizing the legally binding rights of Nature, and in 2013, Santa Monica became the first city on the west coast to recognize the inherent rights of Nature to exist and flourish, as well as the related right of people to a healthy environment, including the right to a sustainable climate. Municipalities in many other states, including Colorado, Maine, Maryland, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Virginia, have also passed local laws recognizing the inherent rights of Nature.

B. Policy trends on the rights of Nature

40. Experts of the Harmony with Nature Knowledge Network, joined by professionals worldwide, urge that, in order to halt the destruction of Nature, laws

[9] See www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2017/0007/latest/whole.html#DLM6830851.

[10] See http://lobis.nic.in/ddir/uhc/RS/orders/22-03-2017/RS20032017WPPIL1262014.pdf.

[11] See www.harmonywithnatureun.org/content/documents/20170405Waterfalls_%20As_Legal_Persons.pdf.

[12] See www.harmonywithnatureun.org/content/documents/160Ecuador%20Constitucion.pdf.

must recognize the intrinsic value of Nature. The following policy examples showcase the urgent need to bring about the systemic transformation necessary to transition to living in Harmony with Nature.

41. On 29 March 2017, Members of the European Parliament, representatives from key European Union environmental institutions and non-governmental organizations and international experts met at the European Parliament in Brussels for a conference exploring the adoption of the rights of Nature and giving legal personality and rights for ecosystems and species in European Union law and policy.[13] Members of the European Parliament Marco Affronte and Pavel Poc, acting as co-hosts, addressed the pressing need for a paradigm shift and expressed strong support for the role that the rights of Nature could play in environmental protection.

42. European Parliament Member Benedek Jávor noted that the entire system was failing to address root causes, and that perhaps the problem lay with the notion of rights. He said it was time to rethink the basic notion of the concept of rights to include non-human beings, future generations and non-individualistic living beings such as ecosystems and Nature. Such an enlargement of rights was not revolutionary, but had happened before and he was claiming now that it was the next step.[14]

43. In Brazil, the city of Campinas, in conjunction with the Ministry of the Environment of Brazil and the National Association of Municipal Environment Agencies (ANAMMA), with support from the Government of the State of São Paulo, hosted a forum on environmental management aiming to, among other things, transform the management of natural resources into the management of the relationship with Earth. The non-governmental organization MAPAS coordinated a panel on the rights of Nature and public policy in cities targeted to public officials, environmental managers and civil society to address the role of Nature's rights and Harmony with Nature in improving environmental managemen practices. In addition, the panel also addressed the United Nations initiative on Harmony with Nature and worldwide developments in legislation on the rights of Nature.[15]

44. The outcome of the forum was the "Carta da Natureza",[16] signed by more than 30 mayors, environmental secretariats, public environmental managers and legislative experts on the rights of Nature, committing to a number of principles on the implementation of the rights of Nature in municipalities. Vanessa Hasson de Oliveira, President of MAPAS, highlighted that the overriding principle 1 of the letter established that the planning and implementation of public policy on environment and health must be rooted in the principle of Harmony with Nature, recognizing Nature's intrinsic value and those of each member of the Earth community, and granting rights to Nature. The signatories of the letter committed to taking the necessary steps to transform environmental law to meet the principles enshrined in the rights of Nature.

45. In Portugal, there is an ongoing petition from Portuguese citizens appealing to the President of the Assembly of the Republic to acknowledge the intrinsic rights of Nature. The petition is requesting that the Assembly adopt the necessary legislative measures to acknowledge that the pursuit of human fundamental rights depends on the recognition of Nature's intrinsic rights. The petition also requests the establishment of a legal duty of the State and all its citizens to respect each and all

[13] See www.natures-rights.org/ECI-DraftDirective-Draft.pdf.

[14] See www.youtube.com/watch?v=7RCqu-nqJkc.

[15] See http://fbga.com.br.

[16] See www.harmonywithnatureun.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/Papers/Carta%20da%20Natureza%20-%20Assinada.pdf.

elements of any ecosystem, as well as the right of any person or entity to require the Government to defend Nature's intrinsic rights.[17]

46. In the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the town council of Frome is in the process of giving Nature's rights to the River Frome through a new by-law that recognizes the rights of the river and the surrounding ecosystem.[18] The River Frome has suffered ongoing pollution over the years, and local organization Sustainable Frome requested that the town council enact a new type of law which recognizes the rights of Nature, stating that that approach provided a model which would allow local people to use law to protect their environment in a less costly and more collaborative way.

47. The International Union for Conservation of Nature, a non-governmental organization with United Nations observer and consultative status, has also demonstrated strong support for the rights of Nature in recent years and hosted the following three major events in that regard.

48. In Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, the World Environmental Law Congress, organized under the International Union for Conservation of Nature and in close partnership with the Brazilian Association of Judges, adopted the rights of Nature in principle 2 of the World Declaration on the Environmental Rule of Law.

49. The World Environmental Law Congress was followed by the endorsement of the Oslo Manifesto by several hundred International Union for Conservation of Nature academics and professionals of environmental law. The Oslo Manifesto calls for a worldwide dialogue to protect the integrity of Earth's ecological systems as the basis of life and human development. A paper discussing the creation of the Oslo Manifesto calls for the establishment of an ecological law and governance association,[19] which is scheduled to be launched in Sienna, Italy, in October 2017.

50. Among other things, the paper discussing the creation of the Oslo Manifesto declares that environmental law is rooted in modern Western law, and has its origins in religious anthropocentrism, Cartesian dualism, philosophical individualism and ethical utilitarianism, and in the ensuing ecological age, that worldview has become outdated and counterproductive but continues to dominate the way environmental laws are conceived and interpreted.[19]

51. In September 2016, the quadrennial International Union for Conservation of Nature World Conservation Congress adopted two resolutions addressing the rights of Nature: a resolution on crimes against the environment and a resolution on humanity's right to a healthy environment.[20] Recognizing the rights of Nature was deemed a groundbreaking new legal structure that fundamentally changed the legal standing of ecosystems. Rather than treating Nature as property under the law, the rights of Nature acknowledges that Nature, in all its forms, has the right to exist, persist, maintain and regenerate its vital cycles. The resolution on humanity's right to a healthy environment further invited States and all stakeholders in the international community to support the adoption of international and regional declarations and conventions that contribute to the recognition of the rights of humanity and all living beings to the environment and the rights of Nature.

52. Other significant outcomes of the International Union for Conservation of Nature Congress were the embedding of the rights of Nature in the Union's Programme 2017-2020 as a priority that aimed to secure the rights of Nature. The

[17] See www.direitosnatureza.org.

[18] See www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Agenda-item-6-For-decision-Establishing-nature-rights-bye-law-for-the-River-Frome.pdf.

[19] See www.harmonywithnatureun.org/content/documents/20170404OSLO_MANIFESTO.pdf.

[20] See https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/IUCN-WCC-6th-005.pdf.

Union committed to specifically supporting wildlife through the advancement of rights regimes related to the rights of Nature through a rights-based approach to conservation, which is consistent with Union resolution 100 from 2012 on the incorporation of the rights of Nature as the organizational focal point in the Union's decision-making[21] and the Union's call for Nature's rights to be a fundamental and absolute key element in all Union decisions. In addition, recommendation 102 of 2016 noted that all World Heritage Sites, protected areas and the sacred lands of indigenous peoples, should be "no-go areas" for mining and other extractive industries.[20]

53. In Africa, a new resolution from the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights marked another important milestone. Resolution 372, passed at the Commission's sixtieth ordinary session, held in the Niger, acknowledges the role of sacred natural sites in the protection of African ecosystems, and the role of Nature in the realization of African people's rights, including the right of peoples to economic, social and cultural development and the right of peoples to a satisfactory environment favourable to their development.[22]

54. Another policy example comes from the Green Party of England and Wales in the United Kingdom, which adopted a rights of Nature policy platform addressing seven distinct responsibilities of humans towards Nature and the legal recognition of rights of Nature as a legal concept to protect ecosystems. The platform added that Nature had rights to exist, persist, maintain and regenerate its vital cycles, as well as the right to restoration and that Green parliamentarians, both in Europe and the United Kingdom, would support any sensible measures to introduce legal instruments related to those rights.[23]

IV. Education on Earth jurisprudence

55. The present section addresses both formal and informal educational activities on the rights of Nature that have arisen in the professional and public spheres to advance Earth jurisprudence. The following examples are representative of such advancement worldwide.

A. Formal education on Earth jurisprudence

56. Advanced Earth jurisprudence education and degree programmes are gradually being put in place and are expected to continue to grow. Formal professional training for Earth jurisprudence has emerged in Africa, Latin America and North America.

57. In Africa, the Gaia Foundation has delivered a mix of educational trainings entitled "Trainings for transformation", on the topic of Earth jurisprudence. A noteworthy accomplishment was the first group of professionals from Benin, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa and Uganda, who graduated from a three-year training course as Earth jurisprudence practitioners. The course includes input from indigenous elders as well as progressive thinkers from all over the world through a dynamic mix of residential trainings, wilderness experience, distance learning and webinars, written and practical assignments and mentoring.

58. Each participant actively works with communities and civil society groups in their respective countries to "reweave the basket of life" for the revival of their

[21] See https://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/resolutions_and_recommendations_2012.pdf.
[22] See www.achpr.org/sessions/60th/resolutions/372.
[23] See https://policy.greenparty.org.uk/rr.html.

traditional knowledge systems and customary laws that protect ecosystems and seed and food diversity. The course also puts emphasis on personal practice, reading the laws of Nature and reconnecting with the Earth. A new cohort of African flag-bearers for Earth jurisprudence will begin their three-year session of professional development in July 2017. Short introductions to Earth jurisprudence are also provided to communities, civil society groups and coalitions across Africa.

59. In Argentina, the Faculty of Law and Social Sciences of the National University of the Littoral has launched an online course to promote knowledge on the rights of Nature.[24] The course went live in April 2017. The syllabus covers the rights of Nature by contributing perspectives and practical interdisciplinary debate and reflection on the topic of Nature as a subject of rights, within the framework of models that are presented as alternatives to capitalism under the ideas of "good living" and "living well".

60. In Brazil, the Federal University of Ceará offers a postgraduate law programme on the rights of Nature. The programme features the participation of scholars from other Brazilian universities who lecture on the rights of Nature, thereby strengthening collaboration across universities on the issue. The Universidade Estácio de São Paulo has established research activities on the rights of Nature and supported seminars on the subject. The non-governmental organization MAPAS also has a research group registered with the National Council for Scientific and Technical Development, a research department of the Government of Brazil.

61. The Colégio Dante Alighieri high school in São Paulo, inspired by the United Nations initiative on Harmony with Nature, has developed a project aiming to engage students in an Earth-centred approach towards protecting the planet. More than 240 students, coordinators and teachers of biology, chemistry, English, geography, history, mathematics, physics and technology will be working on an interdisciplinary project modelled after the United Nations virtual dialogue on Harmony with Nature held in 2016.[25]

62. The students are exposed to the concept of the rights of Nature through texts, broadcast materials and discussions with experts to advance Sustainable Development Goal 12, target 12.8, which states: "By 2030, ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature". At the conclusion of the project, the students will present their own views on their findings.

63. In Canada, an inspiring example of economics initiatives is the Economics for the Anthropocene partnership (E4A), a graduate training and research partnership that includes academic, government and non-governmental organizations. E4A is training more than 60 graduate students based at McGill University, York University and the University of Vermont. The overarching goals of the programme are to articulate, teach and apply a new understanding of human-Earth relationships grounded in and informed by the insights of contemporary science. Research resulting from the E4A community ranges from ecological finance to global food systems to watershed governance and climate activism.[26]

64. In Mexico, the Autonomous University of Guerrero includes, in its Bachelor and Master of Laws programmes, a class on environmental law and living well and a class on bioethics, rights of Nature and rights of animals. Furthermore, its Faculty of Law, in its vision and mission, now recognizes that human rights and the rights of

[24] See www.fcjs.unl.edu.ar/sitios/cursosvirtuales/Pages.showSubcategoria&id=649.
[25] See www.colegiodante.com.br.
[26] See https://e4-net.org.

Nature are complementary. In addition, the University's history curriculum within the Faculty of Philosophy and Literature offers a programme on environmental history.

65. In the United Kingdom, the School of Economic Science in London hosted a conference entitled "Why values matter: the power of purpose and values: the path to a better world".[27] The conference explored and debated values and principles relating to Earth jurisprudence and the path towards living in Harmony with Nature, such as celebrating diversity, appreciating uniqueness and acting in the interests of the common good. The University of Wales, Lampeter, created a programme in ecological stewardship and terminology for graduate students.

66. In the United States, rights of Nature concepts are increasingly being taught in schools and universities. For example, Vermont Law School offers a course entitled "Earth law" that describes legal, economic and other governance systems that recognize the inherent rights of the natural world to exist, thrive and evolve, and then discusses how such systems can be implemented to advance lasting sustainability.[28] Another example within secondary schools is the Earth Law Center's Bottle Biosphere Educational Project, which teaches students how to create their own biospheres and about the implementation of laws that protect the rights of ecosystems.[29]

67. It is important to highlight that shifting formal education from a human-centred worldview to an Earth-centred one is a complex undertaking. However, scholars are increasingly working towards that end to inform new generations with the fundamental knowledge that we are all part of Nature.

B. Informal education and public engagement on Earth jurisprudence

68. During the period 2016-2017, academics, civil society organizations, federal courts and research institutes worldwide have been hosting seminars at the local, national and international levels and congresses and debates to discuss and advance Earth jurisprudence. Among the main themes, Harmony with Nature and the rights of Nature have been discussed in the context of democracy, constitutionalism, the United Nations initiative on Harmony with Nature and the principles of environmental law and sustainability, and conferences and events have engaged public attention on the rights of Nature.

69. In Australia, Argentina, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Germany, Italy, Mexico, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, professional networks on Earth jurisprudence have expanded, and have increased public engagement on the topic of Harmony with Nature.

70. Argentina hosted a conference entitled "Rights of Nature: transatlantic and cross-disciplinary perspectives",[30] with the support of BAYLAT, an organization dedicated to promoting cooperation between Bavarian and Latin American universities and research institutions, that called upon expert voices from both sides of the Atlantic, across disciplines and from academic institutions, to discuss the importance of living well and in Harmony with Nature. The objective of the seminar was to prioritize debates and discussion on the varying transatlantic and cross-disciplinary perspectives on the rights of Nature. Records of the conference

[27] See www.gcgi.info/index.php/confs/800-13th-gcgi-international-conference-and-the-3rd-joint-gcgi-a.

[28] See www.vermontlaw.edu/academics/classes/class?classid=1770.

[29] See www.earthlawcenter.org/education-and-outreach.

[30] See www.unl.edu.ar/agenda/index.php?act=showEvento&id=12827#.WUrJSsaZNAY.

dialogues will serve as references for larger discussions and educational research on the rights of Nature.

71. In Australia, two events dedicated to educating professionals and members of civil society on the rights of Nature were convened. The Australian Earth Law Alliance organized a conference to examine the future of environmental law in Australia. To coincide with that, the Alliance convened an arts festival to represent the ideas and creative reinterpretations of the conference themes, entitled "The rights of Nature Australia, 2016."[31] The first tribunal on the rights of Nature was also held, in which a panel of experts heard cases presented by citizens and Earth lawyers on matters concerning ecosystem destruction in Australia. In addition, a new organization was established that focuses on training legal practitioners and members of the judiciary, with aim of bringing about the transition to Earth jurisprudence and acknowledge the rights of Nature.

72. The Plurinational State of Bolivia hosted the twentieth International Environment Forum,[32] which focused on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 12, on responsible and sustainable lifestyles in harmony with Nature; Goal 4, on values and education; and Goal 11, on sustainable urban communities. In many places, local governments have already taken the lead in transitioning towards sustainability.

73. In Brazil, Ceará State University and the Governor of the State of Ceará hosted an international conference on the knowledge required for a planetary citizenship.[33] The objective of the conference was to address the urgent need to rethink education, reinvigorate humanism and restore planetary ethics and solidarity. In addition, a research group on advanced studies in environment and economics in international law from the law school at the Federal University of Santa Catarina is hosting an international seminar on human rights and rights of Nature in September 2017, to promote a debate on the recognition of the inextricable connection between the two.

74. Another example comes from the non-governmental organization Pachamama Nation, which is active in sensitizing civil society about the rights of Nature and the urgent need for humankind to reconcile with Mother Earth. Most recently, the organization hosted its sixth international festival in Brasilia, in which multiple awareness-raising cultural activities were held for the strengthening of the engagement of civil society towards a better relationship with Mother Earth. A panel on Earth jurisprudence and Harmony with Nature was also hosted with the participation of Brazilian expert members of the Harmony with Nature Knowledge Network.

75. In Canada, a joint conference of the Canadian Society for Ecological Economics and the Economics for the Anthropocene partnership will be held in Montreal in October 2017. The conference is entitled "Economies in an age of limits: a time for (r)evolution!" It asks the question: "In an age where our Earth limits are increasingly perceptible, how can our economic systems take them into account?" By recognizing the need to redefine ecological and social justice, the conference aims to highlight the current ecological and social challenges and the different visions and tools that fuel change, as well as paths to be undertaken to transform the economic system. Conference themes include "alternative movements and discourses", which will explore innovative visions of a just and environmentally

[31] See www.earthlaws.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/RONA16-Flyer_April-2016.pdf.
[32] See http://iefworld.org/conf20.
[33] See www.uece.br/eventos/spcp.

sustainable future and discuss ways of understanding and deepening human-Earth relationships.[34]

76. Costa Rica played host to the sixth international meeting of CONPEDI, the Brazilian National Council on Research and Graduate Courses on Law, in association with the National University of Costa Rica. The sixth meeting was focused on human rights, constitutionalism and democracy. Among the topics studied and debated were environmental law, sustainability and Nature's rights. Numerous Brazilian professors from various Brazilian universities attended the meeting, including the Federal Universities of Goiás, Santa Catarina and Ceará. Several scholars and experts of the Harmony with Nature Knowledge Network, who had participated in the United Nations dialogue on Harmony with Nature held in April 2017, also hosted a panel on Earth jurisprudence.

77. Germany hosted an event entitled "Rights of Nature in transatlantic perspective", in partnership with the National University of the Littoral and the Rachel Carson Center, with the support of BAYLAT. The event was held to educate participants to recognize the rights of Nature as one of the legal field's most important discussions of our time and beyond. The event recognized the progress on rights of Nature, and singled out the progress made in some Latin American countries, where constitutions, national and local regulations recognized Nature as a legal entity. The workshop aimed to improve the current debate through an interdisciplinary and transatlantic perspective, relating Latin American and European and international current developments to each other.

78. In Italy, the University of Bologna School of Law hosted an international conference entitled "How to govern the ecosystem? a multidisciplinary approach", in support of the United Nations initiative on Harmony with Nature.[35] The conference was sponsored by Fondazione Flaminia and La Cooperativa Sociale Il Cerchio. The main objectives of the conference were to create a transdisciplinary network for academics and activists who operate in defence of the environment, and who share the belief in the need for a move to a holistic and ecological approach in the defence of Mother Earth; and for students and citizens to become informed and sensitized to the existence of different approaches to environmental problems, Earth jurisprudence and the United Nations initiative on Harmony with Nature. The outcome of the conference will be published as an e-book, expected in November 2017.

79. Also in Italy, the "Tour 2017 por la Pachamama" included more than 14 stops in 11 cities and towns. Each part of the tour featured live musical performances, informational discussions or documentary footage, and festivities focused on living in harmony with Mother Earth. The festivals "Terra viva! I Diritti della Madre Terra" and "Giorno fuori dal tempo" also took place, adding to other conferences, dialogues and ceremonial events that engaged and educated Italian civil society on the rights of Nature.

80. Mexico City hosted the first international forum for the rights of Mother Earth.[36] The Government of Mexico, in partnership with representatives of civil society, the National Human Rights Commission of Mexico, universities and the Government of Mexico City, brought together activists, theorists, researchers and scholars from around the world to address the unequal relationship between Mother Earth and humans. The forum centred on the importance of legislating the rights of

[34] See http://montreal2017.consee.ca/en/home.

[35] See www.fondazioneflaminia.it/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/LOCANDINA.pdf?48aec7.

[36] See www.harmonywithnatureun.org/rightsofnature.html.

Mother Earth and worked towards supporting and implementing the amendment to the Constitution of Mexico City to recognize Nature's rights.

81. The forum generated an international multidisciplinary working group to follow up on the drafting of a universal declaration of the rights of Nature and defined actions to influence national and international legislation in favour of an Earth-centred vision. The initiative highlighted the imperative need for citizens to assume responsibility for the care of Mother Earth and establish systems of governance that restore the respectful bond with Nature. Furthermore, the key roles played by the National Autonomous University of Mexico and the Autonomous University of Guerrero have been instrumental in sensitizing the public at large and in the dissemination of academic papers on the complementarity of human rights and the rights of Nature.

82. In Mexico alone, more than 100 events, including book fairs, art exhibitions, films and festivals related to Mother Earth were organized, including the release of Thomas Torelli's book, *Another World*, in May 2017, and ongoing television programmes such as "What it means to be part of Mother Earth" by Alberto Ruz, a member of the Harmony with Nature Knowledge Network.

83. In Spain, 12 conferences and 3 educational specials on the rights of Nature were hosted over the past year. For example, the organization Solidaridad Internacional Andalucía produced an hour-long documentary called *Reimaginar lo global: pueblos y naturaleza en el centro de la globalización*.[37] A concert and discussion with Lluramae, the community founded by Miyo Fiel, on ecovillages, native ceremonial events for Mother Earth, the celebration of Mother Earth at la Semana Internacional del Arte de Cooperar and the twentieth summit of the European branch of the Global Ecovillage Network were also held, with the support of representatives from Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America.

84. Sweden held its first Earth Rights Conference on the rights of Nature. A main outcome of the conference was the adoption of a declaration of "Five changes we want to see", which included "learning to govern ourselves in alignment with the Laws of Nature; listening to and speaking for Nature; connecting and cooperating across borders; healing past wounds, individually and collectively, in order to move forward; and standing up and taking action for Earth Rights with love".[38] Participants came from civil society organizations, academia and business.

85. Some of the topics discussed included ecocide law, local action for the rights of Nature, international tribunals, art for the rights of Nature, the connection between human rights and the rights of Nature, the role of native spiritual traditions and the "more-than-human world" in education. Side events included meetings with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sweden, the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, Members of Parliament, the Stockholm Resilience Centre and the participation of several environmental non-governmental organizations.

86. In Switzerland, a signature campaign created by the non-governmental organization Rights of Mother Earth to encourage the United Nations to engage in the formal drafting of a universal declaration of the rights of Mother Earth, has collected more than 800,000 signatures at the time of writing, and aims to reach 1 million signatures by 2018 to coincide with the commemoration of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.[39] In another example, the non-governmental organization Objectif Sciences International hosted its fifth annual international conference on the rights of Nature at the Palais des Nations. Presentations and

[37] See www.youtube.com/watch?v=GGnjSIH9O9s.
[38] See www.earthrightsconference.org.
[39] See www.rightsofmotherearth.com.

debates took place between members of civil society and governmental and non-governmental actors. The sixth annual conference will be held on 11 and 12 December 2017 and will bring together civil society networks, scientists and government representatives from many countries.

87. In the United Kingdom, at Glastonbury Festival, which is the largest music festival in Europe, Jean-Paul Mertinez co-produced a unique performance of indigenous artists, representatives and leading western musicians that was attended by 90,000 people. The performance featured indigenous representatives, leaders from Native American and Australian Aboriginal communities, Senegalese musicians and western music artists, who performed traditional songs and spoke about the rights of Nature and the need for everyone to respect and respond to the natural laws of their traditional worldviews. The audiences, performers and creative teams are looking into creating new artistic work to disseminate the Harmony with Nature programme. In addition, the Ecocentric Alliance launched the *Ecological Citizen Journal*, a free-to-access academic publication mobilizing discussion with an Earth-centred perspective.

88. The Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature has adopted a model for adjudicating cases from across the globe under the rights of Nature paradigm: rights of Nature tribunals.[40] The citizen-created initiative, led by lawyers and other leaders in Earth law, acknowledges that ecosystems possess inherent rights, as do the indigenous peoples who live in them. During the tribunals, a panel of judges hears evidence and makes judgments on the basis of evidence submitted of violations of Nature's rights, as well as related human and indigenous rights violations. A rights of Nature tribunal is planned for Bonn, Germany, in November 2017. Several regional tribunals have also been convened, including in Australia, Ecuador and the United States.

V. Conclusion

89. At the present time of great ecological challenge, we have begun to expand our consciousness and understanding of the connection between planetary well-being and the well-being of the human species. Under the current dominant human-centred paradigm, value systems and lifestyles are two of the most difficult behaviours to alter, as they are deeply embedded in modern society.

90. However, an increasing number of efforts are under way to change such behaviours by creating new collective realities in law, ethics, economics, education, science and government to implement a new understanding of the world. That has been the task of the experts in the Harmony with Nature Knowledge Network, who are committed in their respective areas of expertise to facilitating societal change that respects Nature and embraces an Earth-centred worldview.

91. Countries around the world, despite their cultural and historical differences, are converging towards a holistic relationship with Nature, specifically by granting rights to Nature. Since the issuance of the experts' report last year and the conclusion of the dialogue in April 2017, those experts have noted significant shifts in the recognition of an Earth-centred or non-anthropocentric worldview by the public at large, and the resulting changes in law and policy.

92. The shifts have been possible thanks to the strong commitment of the experts, and their ability to render the work of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in more user-friendly and accessibie terms through the various formal

[40] See http://therightsofnature.org/rights-of-nature-tribunal.

and informal educational programmes and public engagements events they have either put in place or participated in during the period 2016-2017. Their contribution is commendable, as it supports the work of the United Nations by reaching out to a wider audience with the common aim of advancing the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, in Harmony with Nature.

93. The critical and diverse roles that non-governmental organizations, labour leaders, faith-based organizations, religious leaders, indigenous and community movements and many other civil society representatives have played in creating societal change must also be underscored. In many of the activities addressed in the present report, civil society has been an important constituency and has been increasingly involved in partnerships with governments to advance the implementation of Earth jurisprudence.

VI. Recommendations

94. **The significant impact of human activities on the Earth's system's has been widely acknowledged by the United Nations, international organizations, the international and scientific community, spiritual leaders, community and indigenous leaders and leading groups and stakeholders worldwide. Addressing the need to restore our relationship with Nature, and to live in Harmony with Nature, is key to reversing the damage inflicted upon the Earth and protecting it from further detrimental human activity. Member States may therefore wish to consider the following recommendations:**

(a) **Invite the existing Harmony with Nature Knowledge Network of expert practitioners, thinkers and academics who work in the natural and social sciences, including physics, chemistry, biology, ecology, economics, sociology, law, ethics, spirituality, anthropology, medicine and linguistics, to continue to advance the implementation of sustainable living in Harmony with Nature, relying on living examples of good practice and current scientific information, in particular from centres of excellence on environmental, social and economic sciences;**

(b) **Showcase and support, through the Harmony with Nature website (www.harmonywithnatureun.org), the work being undertaken by Member States, civil society groups and other stakeholders, and the growing knowledge network on the subject, in order to develop holistic and integrated approaches and actions to foster sustainable living in Harmony with Nature.**